



The International Science Fiction Association of Professionals

WORLD SF NEWSLETTER

No.2: 1991

CHENGDU MEETING UPDATE

Good news has been received from the organizers of the WSF meeting in Chengdu, Republic of China, which it is hoped will reach members attending the meeting in time:

ACCOMMODATION

The charges for accommodation in both the JiagJiang Hotel and the University Guest House have been reduced:

JiagJiang Hotel \$70 per person per day
University Guest House \$40 per person per day

The above charges include three meals each day, transport within the city and entertainment for the duration of the WSF meeting. There is a 15% discount for double occupancy of rooms.

The following comments are from the organizers of the meeting:

It is our great pleasure to tell you that a lot of preparations have been accomplished for the meeting here in China. Many publishers, SF writers and SF fans are coming to Chengdu to meet you. They are looking forward to exchange with you opinions on SF writing and publishing in China. In order to welcome you, our distinguished guests, a magnificent and colourful opening ceremony has been carefully prepared. Also included in the celebration list are Chinese Childrens' SF Paintings, Exhibition of Chinese SF Publications, SF TV, Cultural Performances of Sichuan Minority People, Field Trips to the Sleeping Dragon National Park to visit the home of Giant Pandas and the 2,000 year old irrigation system. Plans have also been made to take our friends to the best Sichuan restaurants to enjoy a variety of authentic Sichuan food. (CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

For more information about this meeting contact:

Yang Xiao
No. 11, Section 4
South People's Road
Chengdu, Sichuan
P.R. China

or

Shen Zai Wang
No. 34, Section 2
South People's Road
Chengdu, Sichuan
P.R. China

Telephone: 028-23869 or 028-673124

Telex: 60108 SCFAO CN

Fax: 028-671771

Members attending the Chengdu meeting should also refer to earlier issues of this Newsletter for information about travel and visa requirements.

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Science Fiction in Albania

So-called socialist countries in Eastern Europe have, in the last two years, taken the first steps towards democracy. In the eyes of the West there is no longer the evil of Communism in Europe, but there is, alas, still one bastion surviving, Albania, a small country in southern Europe with three million inhabitants. Albania has been totally closed to the world since the early 1960s, when its then president, Enver Hoxha, broke all ties with his last *friends* - ally countries in the Communist bloc. When Hoxha died in the mid-1980s his successor, Ramiz Alia, started reforms that opened Albanian society a little. Even so, the exchange of information between Albania and other countries is still not absolutely free.

A couple of years ago a short note about Albanian SF was published in an official propaganda bimonthly *New Albania*. The magazine *Horizonti* was mentioned, where "science fiction stories about the fabulous discoveries of science in the future" are published in each issue. A few months ago the first group of Czechoslovak tourists visited Albania. Among the travellers was Mr. Vlastimir Talas, editor of one of the two Czechoslovak SF magazines - the quarterly *Svet Fantastiky*. He visited the magazine *Horizonti* and its editor in chief Thanas Qerama, the only real Albanian SF writer. For Mr. Qerama the visit was a great surprise, and he said it was his first contact with an SF personality from outside Albania.

Thanas Qerama was born on August 7th, 1945, in the Albanian capital Tirana. He studied Albanian language and literature at the University of Tirana, and then joined the magazine *Bashkimi* in 1969, and later became director of the Albanian Press Agency (ATSh). Since 1979 he has been editor in chief of the science magazine for youth *Horizonti*. He is one of the precursors of *fantastiko-shkencor* (science fiction) in Albania. His own SF publications include the short story collection *Roboti i pabindur* (Disobedient Robot, 1981), and four novels all written for children and youths: *Nje jave ne vitin 2044* (One Week in the Year 2044, 1982), *Dy rruge drejt ylberit* (Two Voyages to Rainbow, 1984), *Fajtori i padukshem* (Invisible Guilt, 1986) and *Misteri i tempullit te lashte* (Mystery of an Old Church, 1987). His most recent short stories are to be published this year as *Under the Flying Saucer*.

The following interview was conducted by post between Albania and Czechoslovakia in January 1991.

When did you start writing SF?

I have been writing short stories and articles since my study at university. My first two books were devoted to heroic Albanian youth, who had been fighting against the Nazis during WW II. Then I devoted myself to science fiction exclusively. The total print run of my five SF books reached 44,000 copies.

Is science fiction popular in Albania?

Yes, it is. The reason is that science fiction is connected with the development of science. Two periodicals popularizing science are published in Albania, the bimonthly *Science and Life* and the monthly *Horizon*. I must point out that in both SF stories are published. In *Science and Life* they are mainly translations, whereas *Horizon* publishes original works by Albanian SF writers.

What can you tell us about the history of science fiction publishing in Albania?

We are only just beginning. The first science fiction books were translated into Albanian in the early 1950s. They were mainly books by classics like Jules Verne and H.G. Wells. But nowadays we know a small number of short stories written by modern writers like Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury and Arthur C. Clarke.

How long is the history of *original* Albanian science fiction?

Probably the first science fiction book by an Albanian writer was *Travel in the Universe*, published in 1978. Since that time

only eleven novels, three novellas and four short story collections have appeared in book form. The average print-run of a science fiction book in Albania is 8,000 copies.

Who are the most popular Albanian science fiction writers?

Only ten Albanian writers are writing science fiction regularly. The most active and popular are B. Dedja and A. Bisqemi, both have published three SF books. Two books have been published by B. Xhano and Flamur Topi, and one each by N. Deda, Vangjel Dilo and Dh. Konomi. And of course I don't want to forget myself in this account, I've published five books.

(Jaroslav Olsa Jr.)

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N E W S

Bulgarian SF writer Alexander Popov has launched a private publishing house, GEMINI BOOKS, and is shortly to commence publishing a magazine of science fiction, fantasy and horror, *Other Worlds*. The magazine will be A4 in size, glossy and in full colour throughout. He is in need of all types of material including novels, short fiction, artwork, news and articles. Would-be contributors wanting more information can contact Alexander at:

GEMINI BOOKS
Alexander x Petrov St. 19 B
Rousse 7000
Bulgaria

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Ever active WORLD SF member Forrest J Ackerman recently spent ten days in England recording an interview with film animator and special effects man Ray Harryhausen. Whilst in Britain he visited the home where H.G. Wells wrote *The Time Machine*, paid respects at the tomb of Mary Shelley, mother of Frankenstein, was interviewed on TV, photographed the urn containing the ashes of Bram "Dracula" Stoker, and arranged for a select group to see the all but lost 1929 motion picture *High Treason*; all these activities in conjunction with a day-long celebration of the magazine he edited for twenty-five years, *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, at the Scala Theatre in London. He has also recently been interviewed for Norwegian and Icelandic

television, and for the Discovery channel and *Around the Mind Bend* in America and for Canada's radio programme *The Ether Patrol*. As an agent he and his associate Jean Stine have made a spectacular sale of fourteen A.E. van Vogt novels to three publishers inside a month.

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WORLD SF warmly congratulates member Gene van Toyer on his new job in the English department at Gifu University for Education and Languages in Gifu, Japan (near Nagoya), and wishes him every success. After April his new address will be:

Mr. Gene van Toyer
English Dept., College of Languages
Gifu University for Education and Languages
2078 Takakuwa, Yanaizu-cho
Hashima-gun, Gifu-ken 501-61
Japan

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Obituary: WORLD SF extends condolences to the family and friends of member Wim Gijsen of Holland, who died October 30th, 1990, at his home in Den Haag, at the age of 57. Wim Gijsen had worked for the Dutch publisher Bert Bakker, was coeditor of the literary magazine *Maatstaf*, was a poetry critic and translator as well as holding an arts degree in sculpture and ceramics. As well as many literary works, Wim Gijsen wrote about a dozen SF and fantasy novels, including *De Eersten van Rissan* (The First of Rissan), published by Muelenhoff in 1980, to become one of Holland's most successful and critically acclaimed SF writers. While working on his last novel, *De Ceders van Urtan*, the final volume of his "Merisse" trilogy, Wim Gijsen suffered a stroke which left him partially paralysed. He nonetheless continued to work on his novel over the next eight months until his untimely death. He will be missed.

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A couple of issues ago this Newsletter gave information about a new edition of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Originally due for publication late in 1991 the book has now been put back to October 1992. The editors still need update information and corrections and can be contacted at:

John Clute, 221 Camden High Street, London NW1 7BU, UK
Peter Nicholls, 26a Wandsworth Road, Surrey Hills,
Victoria 3127, Australia

PROTOSTELLAR is the name of a new magazine devoted to SF, fantasy and horror. According to the publishers the magazine will contain: articles, short fiction, cartoons, book and cartoon reviews, film guides, interviews, essays, convention reports, gossip, news, humour, a lot of bull, critical appraisals, discussion, reader's letters - and all on SF fantasy and horror. The first issue is due for publication in late spring, and a subscription costs UK£8.00 for 4 issues. If you are interested write to:

Protostellar
PO Box 491
Coultsden
Surrey, UK CR5 2UJ

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Another new magazine, also from the UK, is *Science Fiction Nexus*. This one claims to be devoted to "excellence in science fiction", and will contain commentary and criticism as well as fiction and artwork. Featured authors will be Geoff Ryman, Colin Greenland, Bob Shaw and a host of others. Details from:

SF Nexus
PO Box 1123
Brighton
Sussex BN1 6EX, UK

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The Italian **WORLD SF** Bibliographic Section has announced publication of *Fantascienza, Fantasy & Horror in Italia, 1990* edited by Ernesto Vegetti and Piergiorgio Nicolazzini. It will cover all related material published in Italy during 1990, and will give full bibliographic information on SF, fantasy and horror titles, both originals and translations from foreign languages. The booklet is scheduled to be issued in May and prices and ordering information will be given in a later newsletter.

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Faxfile update:

Forrest J. Ackerman, Hollywood, USA: 213-664-5612

Brian Aldiss, Oxford, England: 0865-326237

David A. Hardy (Astro Art), Birmingham, England:
021-777-2792

Locus, Oakland, California, USA: 415-339-8144

Piergiorgio Nicolazzini, Editrice Nord, Milan, Italy:
02-4042207

Andrew Preston, ABC Radio, Sydney, Australia:
02-339-2622

Gianfranco Viviani, Editrice Nord, Milan, Italy:
02-4042207

Other numbers gratefully received.

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LETTERS

From N. Lee Wood

The following is an open letter from WORLD SF General Secretary N. Lee Wood addressed to Wiktor Bukato:

Dear Wiktor,

I'd like to respond to your open letter in the last issue of WSF Newsletter, since despite Norman's letter in a previous Newsletter, you still have concerns over the vote in Den Haag. I doubt there are too many other WSF officers who knew more concerning the Chinese bid for 1991 than I did, and I hope I can answer any lingering doubts so that we can get on with the business WSF was founded to do: Promoting communication among professionals in SF and fantasy worldwide.

For the first time in WSF, in 1989 in San Marino, we had three competing bids for the 1991 site: Zagreb, Cracow and Chengdu. Zagreb withdrew in favour of Cracow, which had won the site for the 1991 Eurocon, and re-entered a bid in Den Haag for the 1992 WSF meeting. The fact that this was a contested vote inspired more interest and debate in our membership, a healthy and welcome change.

The international language of WSF, for better or worse, is English. Ms. Yang Xiao had arrived in San Marino with an interpreter, but unfortunately her interpreter fell ill. (Ms. Yang Xiao was also ill during this time, but attended the meeting anyway.) Yang Xiao's English is adequate for light social situations, but she doesn't speak English with anywhere near your level of proficiency or fluency, Wiktor. It became obvious that Yang Xiao was having difficulty in answering some vital questions, due to language barriers.

Contrary to your statement that the President did not consult with the Trustees, because of the nature of these problems, the President did indeed consult with the Trustees. The decision made was that I, with the invaluable help of Japanese member Mrs Shibano, should sit down with Ms. Yang Xiao and work out answers to certain questions. The way the *translation* worked, I would ask a question in English, Mrs Shibano would write it down in Japanese ideograms, which are similar enough to Chinese for Yang Xiao to read, Yang Xiao would respond by writing in Chinese and Mrs Shibano would translate the answers back to me in English. I hope you can see by this complicated means the time consuming patience necessary to get answers to questions.

We returned to the meeting, where I delivered what I understood of the Chinese bid from the answers Yang Xiao had been able to give in this awkward way. After, there were further questions, but the problems in communication didn't leave enough time to go back for another session with Ms. Yang Xiao and Mrs Shibano. The vote was indeed slightly in favour of Chengdu over Cracow, but if you recall, an impending Italian train strike rather decimated our attending members. Since there were very few people attending to actually vote (By-law 8 of the WSF Constitution requires at least nineteen attending members), and since more than a quarter of the members present requested the vote be deferred, once again, the President consulted with the Trustees. By-law 10 of the WSF Constitution was interpreted to allow the vote in San Marino to be deferred to the meeting in Den Haag, when questions could be better addressed. The membership in attendance in San Marino approved the deferral for the *final* vote to be made in Den Haag in 1990.

As to the Chinese presentation in Den Haag, the Chinese did nothing dishonest or deceitful. They simply did an outstanding job. In San Marino, Zagreb had come prepared for their bid with a stack of very professional looking folders stocked with travel brochures, hotel information, tours offered, maps, etc. (I kept mine, since some of the pictures were so lovely.) I don't recall what Cracow had come with, but I do remember you gave an excellent verbal presentation. Yang Xiao had arrived in San Marino handicapped by the loss of her interpreter, and unprepared for the barrage of questions. But when she went home, the Chinese delegation simply got their act together and came back to Den Haag fully prepared for an all-out bid. If nothing else, the Chinese presentation has raised the standard of how bids may be made in the future. I certainly hope so.

As to proxies, yes, indeed, there were pro-Chengdu proxies collected by other members of WORLD SF to present at the vote. The WSF meeting was held at the same time as the Worldcon, and some members couldn't attend the vote as they had obligations to appear on Worldcon panels. There were no proxies from any member who was not actually an attending member of the WSF meeting in Den Haag. There were not *numerous* pro-Chengdu proxy votes, unless you consider little more than a dozen proxies as *numerous*.

I was there Wiktor. I counted the votes. As I recall, there were about an equal number of proxy votes for the Cracow bid, and if the Cracow delegation had collected *hundreds* of proxies, they would most likely have been ruled invalid. No one who was not an attending WSF member could have voted, and since there were less than a hundred people at the meeting, *hundreds* of proxies would have been very suspect indeed. The subject of proxy votes is a non-issue.

It is true that the Chinese sent out a number of official invitations prior to the meeting in Den Haag. When Norman and I received our invitation, I was concerned, and immediately wrote to Yang Xiao, spelling out clearly that the Chinese delegation still had to compete for the vote in Den Haag. One explanation was that the invitations were *conditional*, since without the invitation you can't get a visa. Getting a visa takes time, and the Chinese were anxious to cover all their bases. If the Chinese sent the invitations and lost the vote, no harm done. If they won the vote, but couldn't get the invitations out in time, the meeting would be a disaster.

Ms. Yang Xiao assured me that the Chinese delegation understood completely that they were required to come to Den Haag, present their bid, answer all questions satisfactorily before winning or

losing any vote. I do not believe they did anything, either intentionally or unintentionally, that should have *disqualified* their bid. There was confusion in San Marino because Yang Xiao speaks limited English. What she may or may not have understood about that vote at that time was certainly due to translation difficulties. The wonderful presentation in Den Haag in perfect English is a credit to Ms. Yang Xiao that she took such pains not to have that problem repeated, not evidence of any subterfuge.

As for the reporting of the vote, I believe Jim Goddard has made his statement clear on that matter. With all due respect to our Newsletter, Wiktor, it ain't the *International Herald Tribune*. Page One news and Page Eight news don't mean too much when the Newsletter is lucky to be large enough to have a Page Eight. People are not going to skip over the report of the meeting to get to the sports section. I didn't even notice the headline on that issue of the Newsletter until you wrote to complain.

The officers of WSF did receive letters from other members expressing concern after the events in Tienanmen Square. I also share their concerns, like you, Wiktor, as you've stated before in the Newsletter. However, WSF is, as stated in the Constitution and By-laws, a *non-political* organization, with no political agenda, open to all members regardless of nationality, political affiliation, race, sex and religion. The internal politics of a country should have no bearing on where WSF chooses to hold its international meeting.

I am an officer and a member of the Board of WSF, a position I do not take lightly. I have made it painfully clear that as an officer of WSF I could not, and would not, endorse one candidate's bid for the 1991 meeting over any other. And as an officer of WSF, I am required to attend the international meeting in Chengdu. I will uphold the non-political Constitution and By-laws of WSF, and abide by the democratic vote of the membership.

That's what democracy means, Wiktor. Individuals vote. Majority carries. Somebody wins. Somebody loses.

In Den Haag we were able to find a compromise solution that benefited the maximum number of members. It was decided that the Polish chapter of WSF would host the European WSF meeting in conjunction with the 1991 Eurocon. There will be people who, for financial or other reasons, can't go to Chengdu, who will attend the European WSF meeting. As far as the question presented to the officers and Trustees of WORLD SF being able to attend the European meeting as well as the international meeting in

Chengdu, that's a matter of personal scheduling. If Norman and I do not come to Cracow, it will be for financial or scheduling reasons, not because we *don't like* Poland. By now, you should know I'm a fairly open-minded person. Any opinions I form about Poland or Cracow I can make very well first hand and on my own, thank you.

On a final note; the Chinese delegation has expressed every desire to work with the Polish membership in arranging some kind of mutually advantageous charter flights through Polish or Chinese, or a combination of both, airlines. I might suggest rather than protesting the validity or invalidity of the vote, or how it was reported, which changes nothing, you might consider how to organize something with the Chinese which may actually help to increase the attendance in both Cracow and Chengdu. As an old American saying goes: If you're handed a lemon, make lemonade.

From Wiktor Bukato

Dear Jim,

This is with reference to your comment in WSF Newsletter in answer to my letter therein. I withdraw the word "lie", since you tell me it was you who wrote that article for the opening of the previous Newsletter. Of course, I understand now that you could not have been aware of all the implications of this or that formulation - though one would expect that in such a situation, when there are two rival bidding committees (and there have been numerous reports of that by Norman Spinrad in past issues), a formulation "expressed interest" would be inadequate. Never mind, however.

You should not be surprised that my information about the Cracow meeting was not equal to that supplied by the Chinese about their meeting: they had been doing that much sooner than the decision was taken, so they have had an earlier start. From the very beginning of our bid it was known perfectly well that the Polish WORLD SF bid was in connection with the 1991 Eurocon, about which there was plenty of information at the Eurocons in San Marino and Fayence and the Worldcon in The Hague. Since WORLD SF members have appeared in all those places, my reasoning was that everybody interested knows everything that is important. What, may I ask, was known of WORLD SF meetings in San Marino and The Hague that was not known in connection with the San Marino Eurocon and The Hague Worldcon? So why do you expect more from a relatively less important venue?

WORLD SF NEWSLETTER

To sum up: it is now so easy to come to Poland that I do not believe any special announcements, preparations or arrangements are necessary. I was expecting some sort of official announcement about the two WORLD SF meetings, with the news that it is enough to arrive in Cracow and everything will be there, waiting for the members. Instead I found your leader, which made me mad because in journalistic practice an unsigned leading article means it is the official standpoint of the organization, and not just a misinterpretation of a report.

And meanwhile - my circular letter brought a certain response from a few members, though not the *regulars* who attend practically every meeting. Therefore I am seriously thinking of abandoning the whole project. Meanwhile I sent another letter to the newly elected officers, asking about their intentions. For if the Cracow meeting is to have any importance, and not be just a token gathering, the officers must be present. And if they cannot come, there is no point in having a meeting which would serve no visible purpose.

(As Lee Wood says in her letter, WSF is all about communication at an international level, to assume that things don't need to be said rather begs the issue. Apart from the members of WSF who attended either of the meetings in The Hague or San Marino there are hundreds of others who, for whatever reason, could attend neither meeting. By working on the assumption that interested parties already had access to all relevant information concerning the Cracow meeting, because by your definition they *must* have been present at one of the meetings cited above, you are, by not supplying information direct to the membership at large, denying hundreds of people the opportunity to decide whether or not they wish to attend the Polish meeting. This, I think, makes you the architect of your own undoing. I don't think, at this late stage, there is much point in going into this matter all over again, but I would just like to point out that there is a disclaimer at the end of every issue of this Newsletter stating that material contained within does not necessarily represent the official stance of WORLD SF, any interpretation to the contrary is regrettable. JIM GODDARD)

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WORLD SF NATIONAL OFFICERS

AUSTRIA

KONRAD FIALKOWSKI, INGLASEEGASSE 68/1, A-1190, WIEN

BULGARIA

ATANAS SLAVOV; 2A D. POLYANOV STR.; 1504 SOFIA

CANADA

EVA SEIDNER, 113 JOICEY BOULEVARD, TORONTO, ONTARIO M5M 2T7

CHINA

YE YONGLIE, 75/302 VILLAGE No. 1, CAO XI ROAD 201103,
SHANGHAI

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

JOSEF NESVADBA, CHOPINOVA 6, PRAHA 2, VINOHRADY

DENMARK

ELLEN PEDERSON, JERICHASGADE 49,2, DK 1777 KODENHAVN

EAST GERMANY

ERIC SIMON, BISCHOFSWEG 74, 8060 DRESDEN

FINLAND

PEKKA SUPINEN, ULVINANTIE 29/5 D 442, 00350 HELSINKI

FRANCE

JEAN PIERRE MOUMON, CHEMIN CALABRO, 83160 LA VALETTE

HUNGARY

PETER KUCZKA, ATTILA U. 35, BUDAPEST 1

IRELAND

HARRY HARRISON, 58 HADDINGTON ROAD, DUBLIN 4

BUT ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:

PROSPECT FARM, TRANNACK, HELSTON, CORNWALL TR13 ODE, UK

ITALY

ERNESTO VEGETTI, VIA MAGGIATE, 37-28021 BORGOMANERO (No)

POLAND

WIKTOR BUKATO, PO Box 983, 00-950 WARSZAWA

PORTUGAL

ALVARO DE SOUSA HOLSTEIN; R. SOARES DE OLIVEIRA; 92-3.ESQ.;
OLIVEIRA DO DOURO - 4400 GAIA

ROUMANIA

ION HOBANA, 115 CHEMIN DE LA VICTOIRE, 71102 BUCURESTI

SPAIN

MIGUEL BARCELÓ, LA MINA 55 P.7-08190
SANT CUGAT DEL VALLES (BARCELONA)

SWEDEN

SAM J. LUNDWALL, STORKOGSVAGEN 19, S-161 39 BROMMA

UNITED KINGDOM

JIM GODDARD, FLAT 4, 13 LOCKWOOD STREET, DRIFFIELD,
NORTH HUMBERSIDE YO25 7RU

UNITED STATES

ELIZABETH ANNE HULL, 855 S. HARVARD DRIVE, PALATINE,
IL 60067

U.S.S.R

YEREMEY PARNOV, RUSACOWSCAJA 27 - Kv.72, SU-107232 MOSCOW

WEST GERMANY

CHARLOTTE FRANKE, SEEUFERSTR. 37, D8193 AMBACH

YUGOSLAVIA

DARIE DOKIC, PANTOVCAK 59, 41000 ZAGREB

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WORLD SF
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75005, Paris
France

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